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**USAID | MACEDONIA**  
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

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## PRESS RELEASE

### **Istituto Nazionale per il Commercio Estero (ICE) and the USAID Plastic Recycling Project bring together Italian and Macedonian stakeholders on plastic recycling**

On June 18th and 19th, ICE and the USAID Plastic Recycling Project organized the first Business-to-Business (B2B) Forum on plastic recycling in Ohrid. On June 18th, the Forum hosted B2B meetings between Italian and Macedonian plastic recycling companies, as well as presentations on the latest trends and technologies in plastic recycling. On the same day, the USAID plastic Recycling Project announced the establishment of PETRA, the first association of entities engaged in recycling in Macedonia. On June 19th, Italian experts presented models and best practices in implementing public-private partnerships.

The Forum, hosted by the Mayor of Ohrid Aleksandar Petreski, is also supported by the Italian Association of Plastic and Rubber Processing Technology Manufacturers (ASSOCOMAPLAST) and the Macedonian Association of Local Self-Government Units (ZELS).

The official opening took place on June 19th at the Kaneo Hall of Hotel Metropol. Ambassador of the Republic of Italy H.E. Donatino Marcon and USAID/Macedonia Mission Director Patricia Rader gave speeches on their respective Governments' support to the Macedonian business sector, with special emphasis on the environmental protection, plastic recycling and public-private partnerships.

"Today's initiative connects two important subjects: the presentation and interest in the latest achievements in Italian plastic recycling technology and the concept for public-private partnership in waste management," said Ambassador Marcon. "The latter is a winning formula that connects municipalities with the private sector, which ensures better quality of services, better environment and better life as a whole. Italy has great experience in this area and we hope that this initiative is only the beginning of the exchange of experience, knowledge and cooperation between our countries."

"Environmental protection is a challenge not only for Macedonia – it is a universal issue," commented USAID Mission Director Rader. "Around the globe, world leaders are focusing on the role of private and public sectors in protecting our planet. That is why it is so rewarding to see here today members of the government, business representatives

and community leaders who are ready to discuss existing and potential partnerships that will turn plastic recycling into a sustainable industry in Macedonia.”

Minister of the Environment and Physical Planning Dzelil Bajrami, Deputy President of ZELS Nevzat Bejta, and Mayor of Ohrid Aleksandar Petreski emphasized the need for increased cooperation between all stakeholders in order to create sustainable policies that will help to attract foreign investment to Macedonia.

In connection to the Forum, on June 19th, the USAID Plastic Recycling Project and the Municipality of Ohrid officially announced the kick-off of the Municipal PET Collection Program in Ohrid by signing a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). In her address to the public, USAID/Macedonia Mission Director Patricia Rader announced that Ohrid will be the center of the public awareness campaign on recycling, supported by the USAID Plastic Recycling Project and implemented by the Municipality, Public Utility Company-Ohrid and NGO Jagoda. Ms. Rader encouraged municipal representatives and the community to intensify their efforts in preserving the natural beauty of Ohrid. Mayor Petreski and Mission Director Rader symbolically disposed of plastic bottles in special containers located at the Ohrid City Square.

#### NOTE TO EDITORS:

The Italian Government has been one of the major donors in the area of environment protection in Macedonia. In 2005, an MOU was signed between the Macedonian and Italian Governments outlining the cooperation of the two countries in the implementation of the Kyoto Protocol aimed at attracting Italian investors interested in earning “green credits” in Macedonia. Under the MOU, a three-year 3 million euros Project for Cross-border Cooperation for Sustainable Local Development of the Border Region of Prespa has been implemented since 2004, including the Municipality of Liqenas (Albania) and the Municipalities of Ohrid and Resen.

ICE is an Agency of the Italian Government present in more than 80 countries. Since June 2000, ICE Office in Skopje acts as a Trade Promotion Section of the Italian Embassy in Macedonia, and has been providing assistance to Italian investors and organizing events and projects promoting bilateral trade and investments.

The \$1.2 million USAID Plastic Recycling Project is implemented by MDC TI-NET in partnership with the Municipalities, as well as public or private waste management companies. The project has recently completed its pilot phase in four municipalities and is now expanding to 20 new municipalities. The project initiated plastic waste collection programs and Recycling Clubs in primary schools, equipped Ecological Islands, and supported eight recycling companies with equipment purchase.

The American people, through USAID, have invested nearly \$500 million in Macedonia since 1993. USAID is implementing projects that create jobs, reduce corruption, and prepare Macedonian students for the workforce. These initiatives improve the quality of life and support Macedonia’s transition to a stable and prosperous democracy. USAID provides economic and humanitarian assistance in more than 100 countries. For more information please visit <http://macedonia.usaid.gov>.